

CADY BORONKAY—THE TECH

Upon receiving news about summer and fall semester plans, MIT community members look forward to a brighter future on campus and a more lively Infinite Corridor.

MIT offers admission to 4.0% of record 33,240 total applicants

Class of 2024's admissions rate was nearly double at 7.3%

By Shelley Choi
NEWS EDITOR

MIT released Regular Action admissions decisions for the Class of 2025 March 14. 1,340 students were admitted from an unprecedented 33,240 total student applicants for an overall admissions rate of 4.0%.

621 students were admitted out of 18,204 Regular Action applicants, for a Regular Action admissions rate of 3.4%. 719 students were admitted during Early Action, from 15,036 applicants, for an Early Action admissions rate of 4.8%.

Last year's overall admissions rate

was higher at 7.3% with 1,457 students admitted out of 20,075 applicants. The Class of 2025 saw 66% more applications in total, according to the MIT Admissions Blog.

Dean of Admissions and Student Financial Services Stu Schmill '86 wrote to *The Tech* that the Class of 2025 will "be a bit larger than typical," as MIT plans to enroll "1,100 students from this year's applicant pool" as usual in addition to students from the Class of 2024 who deferred enrollment.

Schmill wrote he believes that the applicant pool primarily increased due to the "permanent elimination

of the SAT Subject Tests from consideration" in the process, as well as the suspension of the "SAT/ACT requirement" because of the pandemic.

Admitted students must decide whether to matriculate by May 3.

Schmill added that it's been an "incredible year" reading "every piece of every application" and giving them the "same careful, holistic review we always have."

"The admitted students are an exceptionally talented group and we are excited to get to know them better – and have them get to know us better – in the coming weeks through CP*," Schmill wrote.

Reif announces big picture planning for Summer, Fall terms

Summer would be a time for 'slow dialing up' towards Fall which will expect "fuller operations" on campus

By Vyshnavi Vennelakanti
STAFF REPORTER

President L. Rafael Reif sketched out the big picture plans for the Summer and Fall of 2021 in an email to the MIT community March 12. Summer is expected to be a time for "slow dialing up" towards the fall. "Full academic and research activities" are expected to resume on campus with the "full student population back to residences, classrooms, and labs" by September, Reif wrote.

Reif expressed confidence in the "basic framework" of this plan but recognized the associated uncertainties with the expectation that working arrangements "will be different in important ways."

Reif wrote that only "a few summer programs are expected to run and not at full capacity." Detailed updates, addressing questions

concerning employees, students, and everyone involved in summer programs, will be communicated over the next few weeks. He also noted that the idea is "to test the preparedness of the systems with a rising challenge, but not to push them to the limit" while preparations for "fuller operations during Fall" are underway.

While MIT faculty and employees will also be welcomed back, those working on "student life and learning" may be expected to come back sooner.

Reif stated that the newly emerged "remote" working arrangements are being considered while following up on one of the "principal recommendations of Task Force 2021."

"Work Succeeding," a cross-Institute planning team led by Vice

Summer Plan, Page 2



CADY BORONKAY—THE TECH

MIT Admissions received a record high number of regular action applicants, 33,240, this year, a 66% increase from the 2024 regular action cycle.

MIT Reflects happens Mar. 11

Event consists of prayer, pieces of music, and reflection

By Rujul Gandhi
STAFF REPORTER

MIT students, faculty, and affiliates came together March 10 for 'MIT Reflects: Moments of Remembrance and Hope,' an evening of prayers, reflections, and conversation about the pandemic's impact on the MIT community.

Organized by Interim Chaplain to the Institute Reverend Thea Keith-Lucas and sponsored by the office of

religious, spiritual, and ethical life, MIT Reflects consisted of prayer, pieces of music, and moments of reflection.

The event opened with remarks from MIT President L. Rafael Reif. "One year into this difficult and unexpected pandemic journey, we come together to remember those we have lost and to bear witness to each other's suffering," Reif said. "By sharing our grief, we deepen our connections to one another, we

reawaken our sense of what's most important, and with care and consolation, we lift each other up to face tomorrow."

Prayers were offered in nine faiths by Zoroastrian Chaplain Daryush Mehta PhD '10, Muslim Chaplain Sister Nada El-Alami, Humanist Chaplain Greg M. Epstein, Buddhist Chaplain Venerable Tenzin Priyadarshi, Baha'i

MIT Reflects, Page 2



TRANS RIGHTS

Rebutting the rhetoric used in favor of anti-trans legislation. **CAMPUS LIFE**, p. 4

SILENCING

A good leader should not silence constituents. **OPINION**, p. 6

COVID SUPPORT

MIT should provide degree extensions and funding to struggling graduate students. **OPINION**, p. 7

YEAR OF COVID

Feeling sentimental on the anniversary of our mass exodus. **CAMPUS LIFE**, p. 5

SECTIONS

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WEATHER

The official start to spring

By Sarah Weidman
STAFF METEOROLOGIST

Every week we pass another milestone that tells us spring is here. Last weekend, though we had to lose an hour of sleep for it, we regained our lost hour of sunlight in the evenings via Daylight Savings Time. A sunset past 6 p.m. is surely a sign of warmer weather ahead! And this weekend, we celebrate the spring equinox, marking when we finally get to see more than 12 hours of sunlight per day.

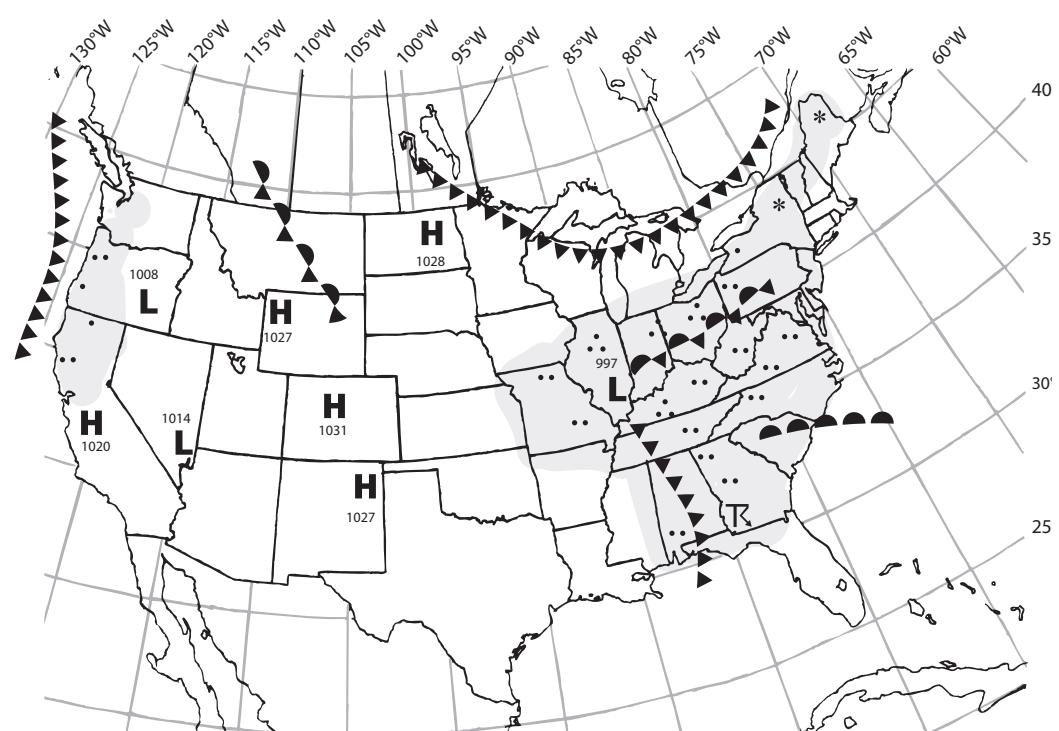
In Boston, spring means some warm days interspersed with rain, gloomy clouds, and fits of cold, but we can be excited about it nonetheless. And as such, we may receive a small amount of snow

tonight despite the warm and sunny St. Patrick's Day yesterday. But never fear, the forecast for next week looks promising for those of you who are ready to trade your winter coat for shorts and sandals. Don't put away your heavy coat for good, but warm days are on the horizon.

Our unusually dry March has certainly not been the case elsewhere in the country. Parts of the Rocky Mountains experienced a heavy blizzard earlier this week with some areas receiving between 2-4 feet of snow. Strong winds and heavy snow caused several thousand people to temporarily lose power and over 2,000 flights to be cancelled. Winter has not released its hold on us yet!

Extended Forecast

Today: Mostly cloudy with rain in the evening. High around 56°F (13°C). Southwest wind around 6-9 mph.
Tonight: Rain, then snow. Low around 27°F (-3°C). North wind around 12-17 mph with gusts up to 29 mph.
Tomorrow: Chance of snow in the morning, then mostly cloudy. High around 36°F (2°C) and low around 24°F (-4°C). North wind around 8-22 mph with gusts up to 31 mph.
Saturday: Sunny. High around 45°F (7°C) and low around 30°F (-1°C). North wind around 5-10 mph.
Sunday: Sunny. High around 53°F (12°C).



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, March 18, 2021

| Weather Systems | Weather Fronts | Precipitation Symbols | Other Symbols |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| H High Pressure | — — Trough | Snow * Rain | Fog |
| L Low Pressure | — — Warm Front | Showers ▽ △ | Thunderstorm |
| § Hurricane | ▲▲▲▲ Cold Front | Light * | ∞ Haze |
| | ▲▲▲▲ Stationary Front | Moderate ** .. | |
| | | Heavy *** :: | Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and The Tech |

Barnhart: MIT 'cautiously optimistic' for Fall

Summer Plan, from Page 1

President for Human Resources Ramona Allen, Vice President for Campus Services and Stewardship Joe Higgins, and Associate Provost Krystyn Van Vliet PhD '02, is starting to assess how "various hybrid approaches to work life" could transpire for MIT Staff. This project tests "a variety of models systematically" that will produce "a range of useful blueprints to arrive at a new normal."

Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart PhD '88 added in an email to *The Tech* that while this is "an exciting and promising step" toward the Fall, the details still need to take shape. She recognized the uncertainties of "the trajectory of the virus, pace of vaccinations, and changing public health requirements" with which MIT is contending while planning for the future.

Barnhart further elaborated that the implementation of the plan for Fall would mean preparing for "in-person instruction and research." She said that she would follow up "directly with all stu-

dents soon" with additional information about MIT's Fall 2021 plan.

She emphasized the importance of knowing that "we are cautiously optimistic about the possibility of all being together on campus again," and expects that "many of the COVID-era restrictions" could be lifted. She stated that before the current plan for Fall could be implemented, "all the Institute COVID policies should continue to be followed" for the health and safety of the MIT community.

Director of Communications for Human Resources Stacie Slotnick, together with the Provost Martin Schmidt PhD '88 and Executive Vice President and Treasurer Glen Shor, shared further information about the "Work Succeeding" initiative and other updates for staff and faculty on March 16.

The updates noted that the budget will be affected due to COVID-19 while "entering a new fiscal year" July 1. It is anticipated that some "amount of Covid testing and enhanced cleaning of facilities" will continue, but that "there is potential for some continued disruption of research as we move into" fiscal year 2022.

In an email to *The Tech*, Allen wrote that the Institute has "more than 13,000 staff and faculty members on campus, at Lincoln Laboratory and other satellite research facilities such as Haystack Observatory and the Bates Research and Engineering Center."

The "Work Succeeding" initiative aims to think holistically about all the staffing areas. This process involves an initial survey of a cross-section of staff members from administrative areas to "gather thoughts on their experience of remote work." After reviewing their feedback, "a range of models and recommendations for the future of work across the MIT community will be considered," both in the short- and long-term.

When keeping "the number of staff, the wide range of work performed, and the decentralized nature of the Institute" in mind, Allen pointed out that "one solution cannot be offered." The summer and fall plans call for "multiple, flexible options to accommodate the varying needs of staff members and requirements for academic, research, and administrative continuity."

CODY BORONKAY—THE TECH
Pi balloons could be found in the MacGregor dining hall to mark this Sunday's holiday.

Maisha Prome '21 performed her poem 'Alive' at MIT Reflects evening event

MIT Reflects, from Page 1

Chaplain Brian Aull PhD '85, MIT Hillel Executive Director Rabbi Michelle Fisher SM '97, MLK Visiting Scholar and Member of the Maliseet Nation Patricia Saulis, Hindu Chaplain Sadananda Dasa, and

Catholic Pastoral Team member Catherine Alex.

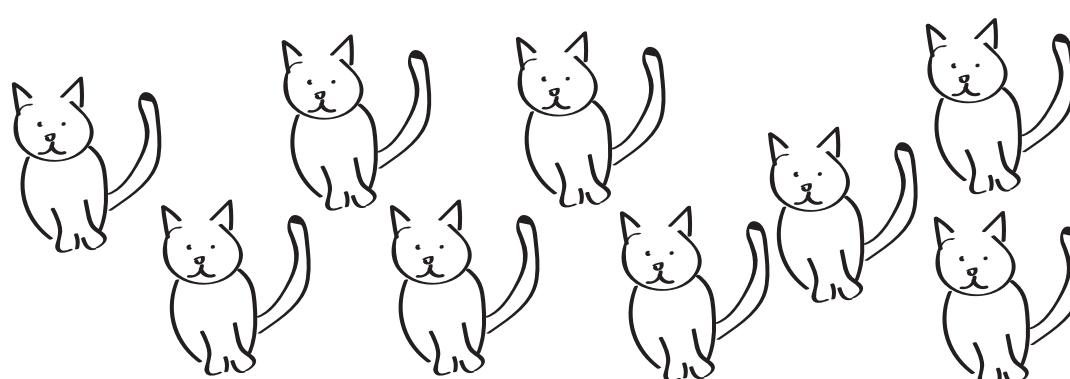
Protestant Chaplain Reverend Natalie Hill and current students associated with the Office of Religious, Spiritual and Ethical Life and the Office of Multicultural Programs lit candles in remembrance of the

groups of people affected by the pandemic and in honor of the values of the MIT community, and Protestant Chaplain Rev. Natalie Hill lit candles at the MIT Chapel. "Even when we are apart, the spirit of MIT burns brightly wherever we are," Keith-Lucas said.

The evening also brought together performances of music and poetry. Assistant Professor Natalie Lin Douglas of the Music and Theater Arts department performed *Lonely Suite: IV. Imaginary Dialogue* by Lera Auerbach on violin, and Emerson Scholar Sara Simpson G per-

formed *Syrinx* by Claude Debussy on flute. At the conclusion of the event, Maisha Prome '21 performed her poem, "Alive."

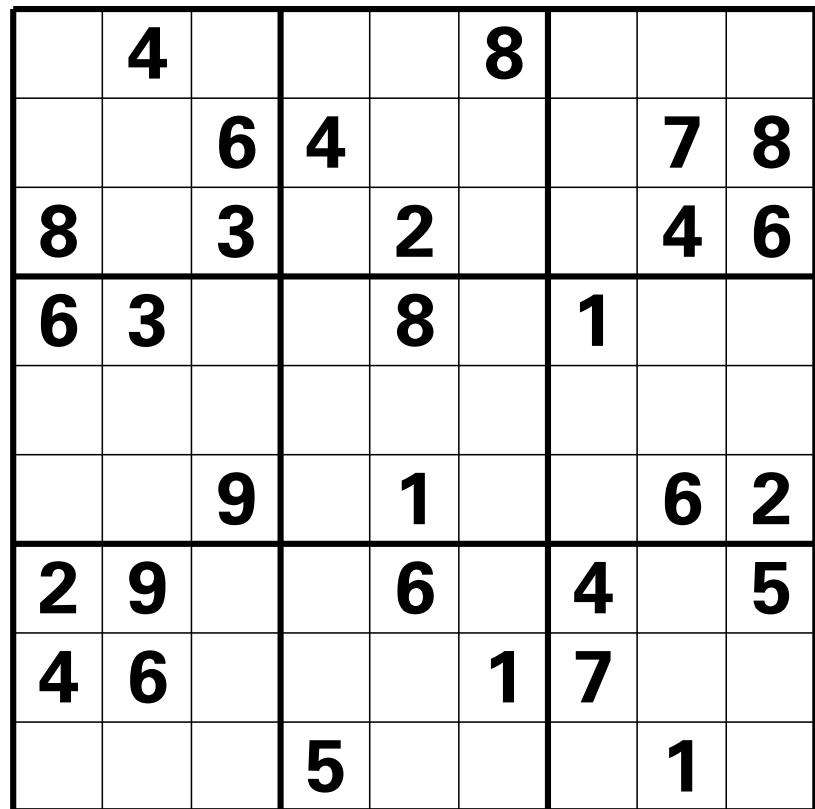
After the streamed event, attendees had the opportunity to converse in smaller groups with one another and the MIT chaplains.



Join The Tech
You'd be a good
CATch

Dorks1

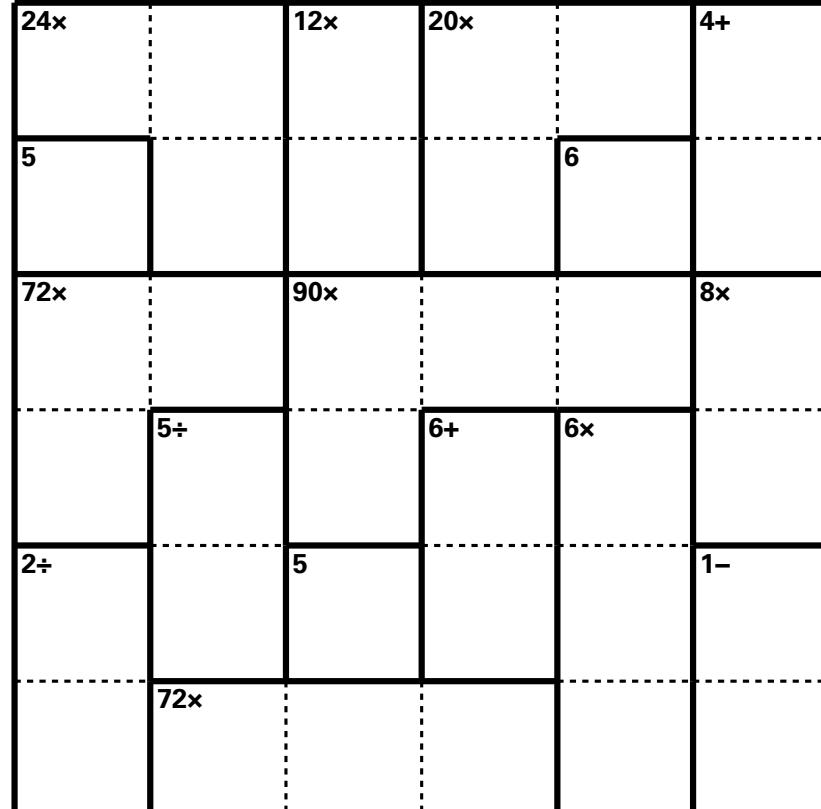
Solution, page 8



Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Dorks2

Solution, page 8



Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

Activewear by S.N.

Solution, page 8

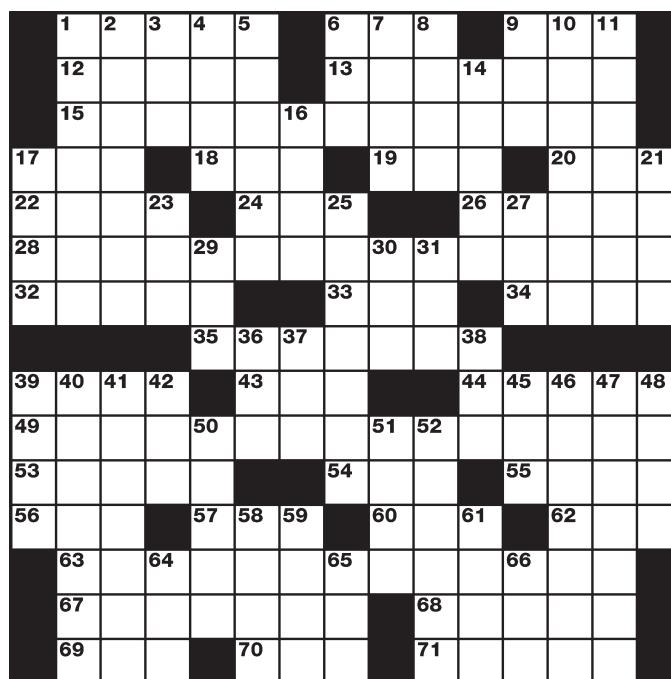
ACROSS

ACROSS

- 1 Cleopatra's country
- 6 Tablet for writing
- 9 Like two peas in a __
- 12 Why a tire is flat
- 13 "Shores of" city in "The Marines' Hymn"
- 15 Had one's best year, as veteran athletes
- 17 Overacting actor
- 18 "Shaky" prefix for center
- 19 Prone to scheming
- 20 Encountered
- 22 Land east of Europe
- 24 Former Ugandan leader Amin
- 26 Being chilled, as wine
- 28 Groups that hire lobbyists
- 32 '50s unsuccessful Ford
- 33 Droop
- 34 Office helper: Abbr.
- 35 Auto part with electrical controls
- 39 Beef inspecting agcy.
- 43 Cul-de-__ (dead end)
- 44 "Belted out a song," for example

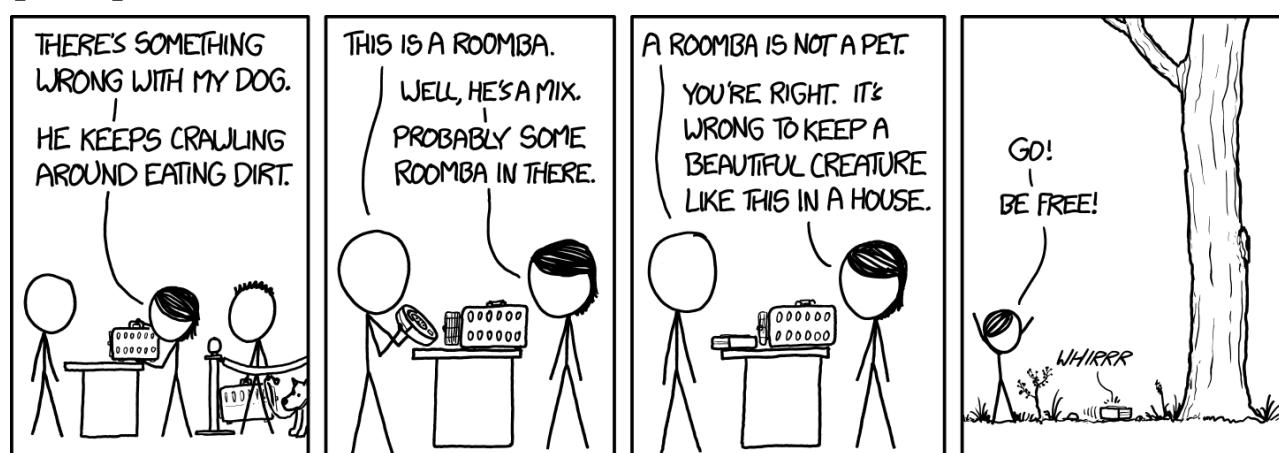
49 Avon
 53 First
 54 Brief
 55 Wizard
 56 Change
 Abbreviations
 57 Glider
 60 Chin
 62 "I take
 63 Una
 haz
 67 Bread
 68 Soap
 69 Pec
 70 Proceed
 71 Star

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 49 Avoided a commitment | 9 "The Raven" writer |
| 53 First half of an LP | 10 Rival of LSU |
| 54 Brief moment, in brief | 11 Helms a film |
| 55 Wizard of Oz barker | 14 Richard of "The Wiz" |
| 56 Character-creating pastime: Abbr. | 16 "See, what __ tell you!" |
| 57 Glide down snowy slopes | 17 Possess |
| 60 Chinese frypan | 21 Try out |
| 62 "I tawt I __ a puddy tat!" | 23 Ingested |
| 63 Unable to fly due to heavy haze | 25 Beetles and bees |
| 67 Bread-browning machine | 27 Teachers' union: Abbr. |
| 68 Soap-on-__ (bath product) | 29 North Pole helper |
| 69 Peculiar | 30 File-folder projection |
| 70 Producer of acorns | 31 Swelled head |
| 71 Stares in amazement | 36 Find a job for |
| DOWN | 37 Feeling mopey |
| 1 Kept in a container | 38 Grandfather clock's top numeral |
| 2 Be inappropriate | 39 Former abbr. for Russia |
| 3 Shrill bark | 40 Avoids something and arrives at |
| 4 Piece of plumbing | 41 Acted charitably |
| 5 Fearful | 42 "Ready when you __" |
| 6 School's bake-sale sponsor: Abbr. | 45 "Spring forward" period: Abbr. |
| 7 Curved lines | 46 Alternative form of an element |
| 8 Face of an old watch | 47 Power failures |



| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 48 Cat's comment | 59 Notion |
| 50 Jobs to do | 61 Actress Sedgwick |
| 51 Chopped down | 64 Ill-mannered man |
| 52 Reusable tote | 65 Annoy |
| 58 Trendy low-carb diet | 66 Fancy-dressing dude |

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EQUALI-TEA TIME

Trans bodies in politics

A chaotic mess of transphobia, misinformation, and scapegoating

By Nafisa Syed and Nathan Liang
SENIOR EDITORS

Equali-tea Time is a platform for educational discourse surrounding various topics about the LGBTQ+ community. If you would like to contribute a guest post, have a question you'd like answered, or want to send feedback/comments on subjects that have been discussed in the column, please email equalitea@tech.mit.edu.

According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), 2021 has already become a record year for anti-trans legislation, with at least 80 bills introduced across the country.

With the recent surge of politicians once again arguing over what to do with trans people's lives, we thought it'd be a good idea to go back and address some of the misinformation that has constantly come up and still perpetuates popular opinion at some level.

Gender identity politics involve a lot of nuance, but the way they are handled in mainstream media and the political arena continues to cause a lot of real psychological (and sometimes physical) harm to trans people.

Here, we review and rebut some common talking points that come up during discussions of anti-trans legislation. We hope to address the harmful rhetoric used to criminalize trans bodies, and help clarify the effects it can have not only on trans people, but also on the groups anti-trans bills claim to protect.

I've heard it can be dangerous to let trans women into public women's spaces because predators could take advantage of this label. I just want to keep men out of women's spaces. What's wrong with that?

This bad-faith argument was commonly thrown around when the topic of bathroom bills first garnered national attention in 2016. They consisted of legislation aimed at barring trans people from accessing bathrooms (and other gendered public spaces, like locker rooms).

North Carolina passed such a bill in March 2016. The resulting backlash, media craze, and proponents for the law brought that decision to the nation's attention.

Many supporters of the legislation claimed bathroom bills protected women and girls in gendered spaces, such as bathrooms. People espousing this rhetoric posited that predators could pose as a woman to prey upon women in these spaces.

Trans people just want to use spaces in peace, like our cis counterparts.

This rhetoric is dangerous. By claiming that trans women are men masquerading as women, proponents of this argument embolden those who seek to harm and dehumanize trans people. Furthermore, the scenarios that many fearmongers concoct to rationalize such arguments are contrived. Trans people just want to use spaces in peace, like our cis counterparts.

When it comes to "protecting women," bathroom bills do nothing. The systemic issues that actually impact the safety of women and gender minorities don't have anything to do with trans people using the bathroom.

Criminalizing trans people via legislation only endangers them further. Trans women, especially trans women of color, number among the most vulnerable population in our society. The HRC reported that 2020 was the most deadly year for trans and gender nonconforming people. The vast majority of those taken from us were Black or Latinx trans women. Unfortunately, 2021 looks like it is trying to keep pace with its predecessor. We have already lost 11 lives to violence.

Trans youth — who already face high rates of homelessness, violence, and poor mental health — stand to suffer greatly from bathroom bills. The bills legalize barring them from the gendered spaces where they may feel most safe and comfortable. Even without the passing and enforcement of such

legislation, the discrimination many trans youth face daily takes a significant toll on their wellbeing. According to a 2019 report by GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network), LGBTQ+ youth who experienced in-school discrimination "had lower GPAs than other students, were nearly three times as likely to have missed school in the past month because they felt unsafe, [and] had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression."

Allowing all children and young people to explore this aspect of their identity freely is important to their healthy development.

A personal side note from Nathan: I particularly remember how heated things were becoming politically because these issues arose around the time I came out. Considering I was still years away from medically transitioning, I was constantly terrified of being attacked (verbally or physically) for wanting to use the men's bathroom. I will admit that I sometimes used the women's bathroom during my freshman year due to a combination of heightened gender dysphoria and social anxiety around using the men's bathroom as someone who was coded more femininely at the time. For the record, doing that sucked a lot, even if it felt right for my personal safety.

I know the medical transition process for trans folks can involve hormones and surgery, but that seems too drastic and unsafe for children. I wouldn't want my doctor recommending surgery for my 12-year-old. Can children even know that they are trans?

Where do trans men fit into the equation, and why are trans women always the primary target of these bills?

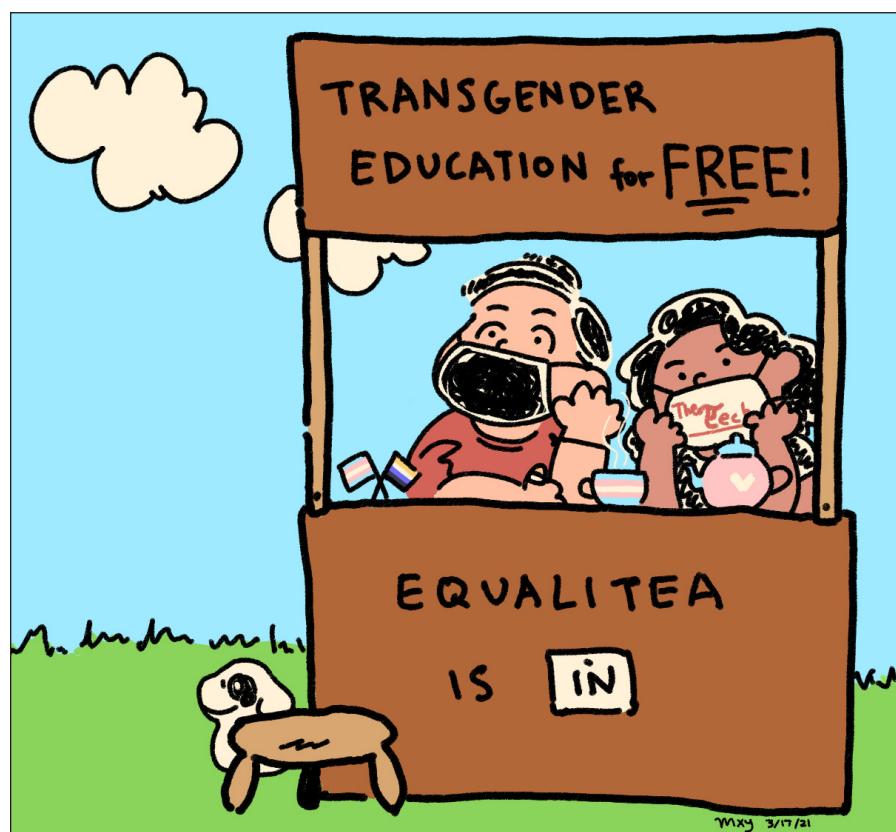
Children begin gaining a sense of their own gender identity when they are three years old. From there, they go on to develop a more concrete sense of gender and the gender roles and stereotypes that exist in their environment. Allowing all children and young people to explore this aspect of their identity freely is important to their healthy development.

Misinformation about transgender healthcare has resulted in a number of people claiming doctors and medical professionals will encourage children to make irreversible changes to their bodies that they will later regret. A number of states are currently considering legislation that criminalizes doctors who provide gender-affirming care for trans kids. This kind of medical support can be crucial to the well-being of trans children who, as mentioned before, are already vulnerable to all kinds of stressors.

For children, medical transition typically involves taking pubertal blockers to "pause puberty." This gives trans children more time to explore their gender identity and expression, with the added bonus that they don't have to worry about their body developing in a way that could be anxiety-inducing.

Gender-affirming surgery and hormone replacement therapy are considered later, when a person is at an age to make independent, informed decisions about their health. It's also important to note that not all trans people want or feel a need to medically transition — the process is different for every person.

So what is the deal with all the trans kids and sports talk right now? Is it not true that trans girls could have a biological ad-



As two Asian American trans people, we hope to provide some insight into the current discussion surrounding anti-trans legislation in the US.

vantage that would make it unfair for the cis girls they're playing with or competing against?

Over the past several weeks, several states have proposed legislation intended to segregate sports on the basis of one's sex. In some states, the bills go so far as to criminalize trans people who attempt to participate on a sports team consistent with their gender identity.

These provisions mean that a trans girl could be charged with a misdemeanor simply for trying to participate in her local girls' soccer team. As with the bathroom bills, proponents of these bills take the stance of wanting to "protect" women and girls. They also claim that these bills would ensure that women's sports remain "fair." These people assert that trans women have a biological advantage via "testosterone." To maintain a sex-based divide in athletics, they call for genital exams, genotyping tests, and testosterone checks.

When our claim to humanity is scrutinized and attacked for all the world to see, it wears us down.

There's a lot to unpack here. First of all, the checks proposed in these bills are gross invasions of privacy, especially for minors. Such assessments also enforce dangerous stereotypes of what it means to be a woman. Anyone suspected of being "too manly" or "too strong," whether they are cis or trans, can be traumatized by these tests. Not only are these legislative pushes transphobic, they are also misogynistic in that they uphold outdated gender stereotypes.

The so-called "biological advantage" argument that many cling to in support of these laws doesn't hold water. It becomes moot when considering children, since trans girls seeking to participate in sport at this age have yet to undergo a testosterone-driven puberty that could grant them a growth spurt and ability to build muscle more efficiently. At more elite levels of sport, there are already trans-inclusive policies that clearly outline trans athletic participation (see the International Olympic Committee's guidelines and the NCAA policies).

In any case, the very idea of "biological advantage" feels contrived when you consider the fact that cis athletes are encouraged

to leverage their biological advantages. Tall cis women are often encouraged to play basketball and are commended on their success when they perform well. Tall trans women, on the other hand, are not likely to receive the same encouragement or compliments. Furthermore, hard work and dedication are key to developing athletic skill. Acting as if hormones and propensity for muscle mass are the only factors to athletic success invalidates the effort all athletes put into their sport.

As you may have noticed, the majority of the legislative actions discussed discriminate against trans youth, who are a particularly vulnerable demographic. Trans men, on the other hand, are often notably absent from conversations around anti-trans legislation.

Where do trans men fit into the equation, and why are trans women always the primary target of these bills? The answer lies at the intersection of transphobia, misogyny, and sexism, and it would take at least another article to provide a more nuanced explanation.

These kinds of bills may seem limited in scope at first glance, but they serve as a potential foot in the door for bigots to establish more severe and sweeping limits on trans people's agency and freedom. This possibility is particularly frightening and contributes to the stress that trans people face daily.

When our claim to humanity is scrutinized and attacked for all the world to see, it wears us down. Trans people have to continually fight for the basic right to *be ourselves*. In doing so, we face discrimination that often stems from misinformation. To better support trans people in and outside of your own communities, we urge cis people to listen to and approach their peers with empathy. Please keep in mind that trans people you know are not there to educate you about their experience. Taking measures to educate yourself is essential when it comes to advocating for marginalized voices around you.

Trans people have to continually fight for the basic right to be ourselves.

If you'd like to share related stories from other parts of the globe (as two Asian American trans people, our scope is unfortunately rather limited), feel free to start a conversation in the comments or email your idea for a guest post to equalitea@tech.mit.edu!

```
from new_skills import *
def learnMarketableJobSkills():
    return linux, OSX, javascript, applescript, perl, python, PHP
if self.interest == True:
    print "E-mail join@tech.mit.edu"
```

The significance of a year

525,600 minutes

By Joanna Lin
PUBLISHER

This past Saturday was the one-year mark of the day I flew home from campus. At that point, we still thought we would be back after an extended spring break. I took a socially distanced, masked walk with the last person I said goodbye to one year prior, and I couldn't even decide whether it was a big deal or not.

There are those who disagree with the concept of celebrating annual landmarks, since a year could be considered a social construct. The passing of each birthday is just a reminder that we've inched closer to death, and barely anyone is able to follow through with their New Year's resolutions since there's no intrinsic motivation to do so.

But scientifically speaking, in some sense, it's a reminder that even though we've traveled one circumference around the sun, we're back in the same place. Distance versus displacement, if you will. And because I'm a sentimental hopeless romantic, that can bring a lot of emotions: surprise at discovering that I've changed as a human being, nostalgia for all the memories that could have been made, hope for a better year this time around.

So, is one year significant? Half of me wants to commemorate the craziest yet most isolating year of my life thus far, but the other half argues that the 365th day is just the one between the 364th and the 366th. You could argue that reaching a critical mass of vaccinations or being able to resume normal life is a better measure of time worth celebrating. But then again, we have no idea when that will be, and as humans, it's more intuitive to think about a concrete date.

Last weekend, the MIT Pre-Medical Society held a panel with some alums, and one of the panelists said that a question they weren't prepared to answer was, "How have you changed in the past year?" It caused us all to pause for a second and consider if we had really experienced any growth since moving off campus last March.

One of the more significant changes this past year was that I all but stopped journaling, something I used to do every weekend since orientation to make sure I didn't forget the minute details of how beautiful college life was. It just didn't seem like there was anything exciting to tell future me. But I'm realizing how sparse the year is going to look when I read back through the pages in 20, 30, or 50

years. The longest year ever will ironically be the shortest in memory.

It feels that way, too. I'm not sure if fewer things happened since everyone was spread out across the world, or if I just blocked out a few months from my memory. From the entire fall semester, all I remember is getting permission to drive the 30 miles to my old roommate's house and dropping off some gifts at her front door.

But just because it was miserable doesn't mean it was without redeeming moments. I, along with a lot of my peers and the rest of the country, first stepped into some sort of awareness and activism. I was also able to spend time at home with my mother and recalibrate my relationship with her as an adult instead of as a dependent. As a scientific community, we made incredible advancements in understanding SARS-CoV-2 and creating multiple effective vaccines.

With my second COVID-era birthday coming up, I'm trying to look back on the past 525,600 minutes with absolutely no desire to go back and just enough gratitude for all I've learned. The grace that my friends, family, professors, and everyone else has shown me was truly unparalleled. Taking a page from *Rent's* book, maybe we should measure the

past year with love. Love received, given, and shared, despite all that we've been through together.



FARIN TAVACOLI—THE TECH

Somehow the year simultaneously was unbearably long and passed in the blink of an eye.

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GUEST COLUMN

Silencing

Leaders at MIT and beyond use covert methods to silence students, constituents, and community members

By Kelvin Green II

It may be contentious to define what good leadership is, but we can attempt to identify what it *looks like*. In the pursuit of understanding examples of good leadership, we can agree that employing tactics to silence the voices of those being led (although effective in limiting operational friction) is not particularly good. Yet we find it common for elected, appointed, and self-chosen leaders in the courts of schools, governments, and communities to silence the voices of students, constituents, and community members who offer different visions or priorities for the leadership.

Understanding the way silencing happens is paramount if we are to move toward unity and justice

Sometimes leaders in power are keenly aware they are silencing the led; they do not shy away from it and tend to embrace silencing because it is easier than listening. Sometimes leaders are unaware they are silencing, and it is often because their good intentions blind them to the point of ignorance that mere individual action is futile against systemic practices and cultural habits. What becomes apparent through living is that if leadership (especially in American institutions) are not actively critiquing their approach to engagement with those that they lead, then the leadership will default to actions that are common in racist, sexist, and classist social structures — the silencing of voices with the aim of total and absolute compliance. Understanding the way silencing happens is paramount if we are to move toward unity, justice, and appreciation of the critical insights we all bring to bear in the advancement of the spaces we have been gifted to occupy.

I am not here to entertain the silencing that is done quickly and callously like ban-

ishment, censorship, and genocide. But what warrants me writing is the silencing that is seemingly more covert, the kind that happens like bricklaying: slow, methodical, and designed to keep troubling voices on the other side of its inevitably erected wall.

If they catch your attention, acknowledge them. Invite them to meet at a table with some people who hold respectable titles like President, Vice President, Associate Dean, and so on and so forth. Do not let them know another table of power exists.

Listen to them, but do not hear them. Write down what they say in the meeting, if you care to demonstrate your listening. Gain their trust.

Distract them from the very reason they got your attention. Tell them what you are willing to do, but frame it as all you have the ability to do. Do not imagine you can do more, because imagination is relegated for children and dreams.

Pacify their activism. Imply with language that their voice or collection of voices has accomplished their intended goal, especially if this language will reduce the level of attention-grabbing activism that led you to acknowledge them in the first place.

Give yourself action items, but only if they are asking for them. Follow through on those deliverables. Reinforce their trust in you as someone who is on their side.

Schedule more meetings with them no sooner than two to three weeks out. And only if they ask for them. And only if they ask with a certain level of seriousness and repetition.

Do not think about your meeting with them until the day before or a couple days before. Refresh your mind so you are ready to engage again, but do not allow their activism to change your heart nor influence your priorities.

If their ideas seem too big, deny your own ability to act on them. Say to yourself it is not worth your time or whatever you must to get on with your day. Do not realize that their approach to offering you ideas and potential solutions is a sign that they are helping you do your job.

If satisfying their concerns does not jeopardize the foundation of your power and will pacify their activism, empower those ideas. If their ideas happen to jeopardize the foundation of your power and the work to modify those ideas would ultimately pacify their activism, then leave your power intact by modifying their ideas and empowering those changed ideas. Do not empower ideas you cannot comprehend, even if the basis for their argument is sound. Do not empower what will result in your loss of power and its transference to them.

Treat them not as critical and necessary to understand, but as utility for your employment when helpful toward achieving your duties and responsibilities. Tell them their voices matter. Do not show them the magnitude of that power. Do not tell them that budgets are moral documents and that their contributions, whether material or intangible, are what make the entire school, government, or community work.

Forget history before profit was the overwhelming motive. Forget education before the development of the student was its primary objective. Forget government before providing for the citizen was the ultimate consideration. Forget community before the sickness of individualism.

Create committees, task forces, and plans that take months and years to delay courses of action. Say to those demanding change that this is how it must be done. Do not concede that there is a better way.

If you do Steps 1-12 correctly, the people demanding to be heard, who want to have their concerns addressed and desire to have their ideas considered, will no longer be in the position to advocate either because they are not around to do so or you have been successfully in the employment of silencing. Wait for the next disturbance, then go back to Step 1.

Kelvin Green II '22 is a member of Chocolate City and the Rho Nu Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and the Assistant Officer on Diversity for the Undergraduate Association.

OPINION POLICY

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GUEST COLUMN

MIT should guarantee funding for graduate students amid the pandemic

Graduate students deserve access to accessible and widely publicized funding and degree extension programs

By MIT COVID Relief

It has been more than a year since MIT's campus shut down to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. Since then, MIT has implemented a range of transformative pandemic policies: campus testing, vaccination, research closures and ramp-ups, and many other ways of making sure MIT students can safely live and work on campus. Unfortunately, despite MIT's willingness to offset pandemic impacts, they have steadfastly refused a crucial pandemic relief policy: funding extensions for graduate students.

Such variable access to extension information and actual funding is inequitable and unconscionable.

While the majority of MIT graduate students can depend on consistent funding until their degree completion, this is not the case for all programs. Programs in the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (SHASS) and the School of Architecture and Planning (SAP), as well as certain programs in the School of Science such as Mathematics, have "funding cliffs." A student may be guaranteed five years of funding, but degree completion in these departments averages six or seven years (while national averages hover between eight and nine years). This leaves students on their own through the most pivotal and stressful years of degree completion. Student and faculty advocates have pushed to close such funding gaps for more than 10 years, with little progress throughout that time. Now, the pandemic is exacerbating these long-running financial pain points. Before COVID-19, degree timelines were already crunched. Now, with pandemic delays, students face even more time before completion, with even less financial support from MIT.

MIT COVID Relief is a student organization with members from all five schools. It formed in early spring 2020 to push for equitable pandemic relief, like stop-gap emergency funding for students without summer stipends; responsible workloads for TAs and RAs; and better communica-

tion and transparency from the central administration. In spring 2020, we also made clear to central administrators that pandemic-induced work delays would be a long-term problem that needed long-term, central solutions.

Lab research on campus has largely "ramped up," but for students whose doctoral research relies on archives and domestic or international fieldwork, options for ramp-up are slim. Libraries, including MIT's own, remain closed. Archives are closed and online materials limited. International travel remains impossible for most. SHASS and SAP students have been forced to make last-minute changes to their entire research programs — changes which themselves take time to implement. Early-stage students cannot carry out the preliminary research they need to make significant progress. At every stage, students continue to face delays. But the MIT administration has been unwilling to develop and implement a policy to equitably offset these serious challenges to non-laboratory research.

Centrally funded and administered funding extensions are necessary to offset this unfortunate combination of institutional neglect and pandemic impacts. Many programs in SHASS and SAP face chronic funding shortages; they cannot support delayed doctoral students alone. In August 2020, Provost Martin Schmidt verbally guaranteed in a meeting with COVID Relief and the Graduate Student Council that "any student that needs funding extensions will get one." But the central administration has left publicizing and distributing extensions up to individual departments or schools.

This is a cynical and irresponsible approach to relief.

Even after the Provost's verbal guarantees, implementation differs between departments and schools, leading to disparate outcomes. MIT COVID Relief recently conducted a survey across SHASS, SAP, and School of Science departments, including Urban Studies and Planning; Architecture; Political Science; the Sloan School of Management; History, Anthropology, and Sci-

ence, Technology, and Society; Linguistics and Philosophy; and Mathematics. Out of 72 respondents from seven departments, only four students have been able to access extensions, two students had their extension requests denied, while three extension requests are still under consideration. Crucially, only 11 respondents had been notified by faculty or administration about the availability of funding extensions. These results indicate that very few, if any, students have heard of the availability of funding extensions. Those who did secure funding either had strong advocates in central school administration or received it as the result of their department's local initiative with no financial support from the Institute as a whole. This leaves access to extension funding up to the whims of the deans or the financial independence and well-being of individual departments. In a global crisis that impacts us all, such variable access to extension information and actual funding is inequitable and unconscionable.

Students deserve to be able to plan their lives and advance their crucial research for more than a semester at a time.

MIT has approached other "emergency funding" programs with a similar unwillingness to widely ensure access. In spring 2020, the Institute started a much-needed pilot program to distribute need-blind grants to graduate students with dependent children. The Institute only advertised this program in the appendix of semesterly "Graduate Student Update" emails loaded with other information (including a suggestion for an app to "help you retrain your body to sleep soundly"). This, unsurprisingly, led to very few graduate students being informed about it. The failure to publicize relief policies suggests that MIT fears "students taking advantage" more than they fear "students going without." This is a cynical and irresponsible approach to relief. Lack of centrally funded, well-advertised programs leaves students with no option but to request funding from faculty

and department administrators who are already struggling with additional financial constraints.

Many of our peer institutions have already implemented time-to-degree and funding extensions for graduate students. Harvard, Brown, New York University, and UC Berkeley have implemented centrally managed extension programs after pressure from graduate student unions. Not only are these programs more accessible to students, many of these institutions implemented them in spring 2020, at the very beginning of the crisis, offering graduate students a degree of certainty in incredibly uncertain times. In comparison, MIT's failure to advertise even the possibility of any sort of extension after a full year of the crisis is shameful. Students deserve to be able to plan their lives and advance their crucial research for more than a semester at a time.

It's been a year since the epidemic began, but the COVID emergency is far from over. Indeed, for many doctoral students, their difficulties are just beginning — a slow cascade created by uncertain funding, delayed research, and lack of administrative transparency. To offset these difficulties, MIT has spent more than \$255 million on pandemic policies in the past year. According to our calculations, pandemic-related extensions for every impacted student without a funding package would cost only \$3 million. In a year where MIT's endowment has recovered 8.3%, MIT can afford to pay its graduate students.

MIT should either publicly admit that it does not care for its graduate students' financial security in a global crisis, or guarantee equitable funding support for any student who is experiencing delays in their research due to the unprecedented pandemic.

The authors of this article are organizers with MIT COVID Relief.

Daniel Engelberg is a third-year student in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

Yadav Gowda is a fifth-year student in Linguistics and Philosophy.

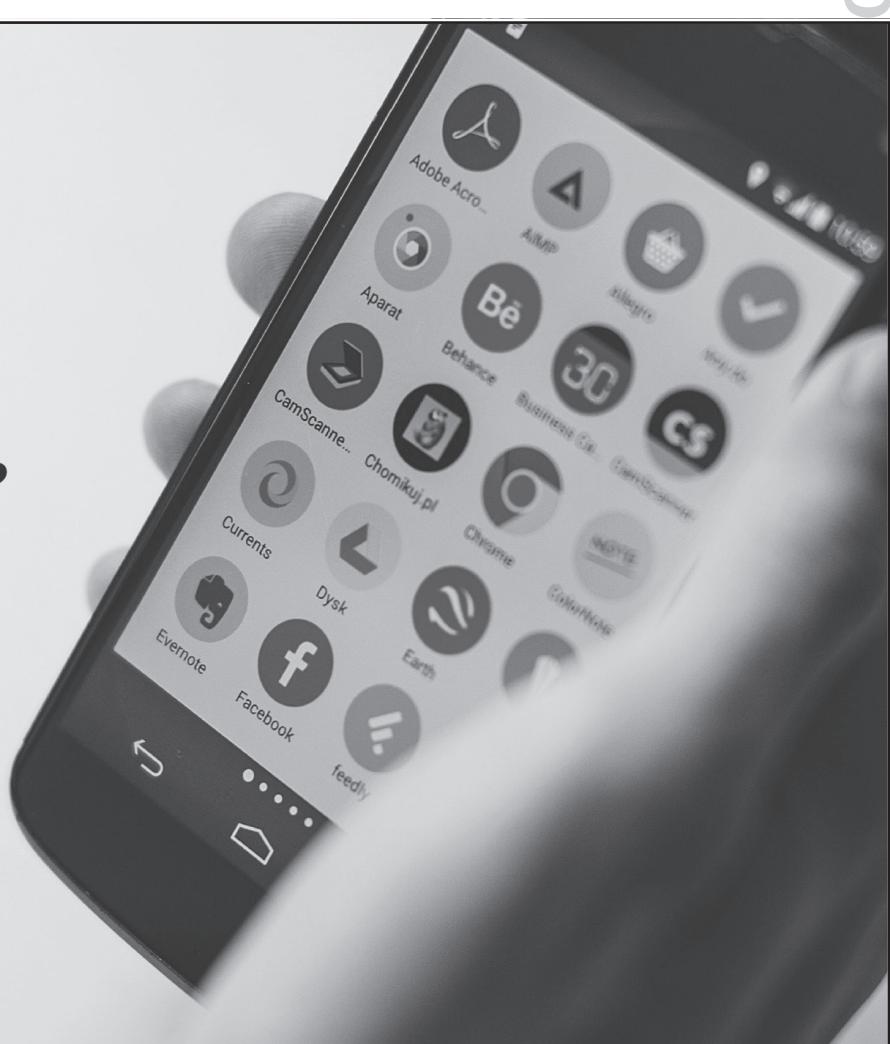
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101 THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU GRADUATE



32. Take a stroll through Little Italy in the North End

Join the Arts department at *The Tech* and write restaurant reviews.

(And get reimbursed for your meal!)